

Stranded at Parent's Reunion

ANUPOMA JOYEETA JOYEE

There is one thing that pains me more than going for makeup classes on a Friday morning, and that is being dragged to my parent's university reunion. This is how it goes for me every year. Let's find out if the agony matches with that of yours:

DENIAL:

I started fearing the reunion day as soon as I got to know of it. On the day of the event I woke up at 7 am with only one thought on my mind: how do I fake a fever?

NO WAY TO ESCAPE:

After all these years I should have just learned my lesson already. There IS no way to escape the inevitable reunion. It was extremely cold so I fake-bathed (an elaborate fraud where you let the water run to make it only *sound* like you're bathing) and got ready being terrified of spending an entire day with my mother's classmates and their talented kids whom I see for an entire day every year.

ENTERING THE ARENA:

I couldn't believe that so many people actually showed up sacrificing a perfectly enjoyable holiday. Minutes into the *shamiana*-clad picnic spot, I could see people from my generation who, surprisingly, were *not* as clueless as I was and seemed to be enjoying the shindig. Is there a secret Facebook group of *Classy Reunited Kids of Bangladesh Agricultural University '85* that I didn't get invited to? Someone was announcing loudly on the stage calling people of all ages to participate in the respective games. I skipped participating in the games; I only went for the food.

FAILED SOCIALISING ATTEMPTS:

I thought I was going to be one of cool kids and socialise my way into the clique maybe by complimenting someone's shoes or shawl? Instead I ended up trying to repeatedly check Facebook at a place which had almost zero network. I could neither socialise face-to-face nor online. It's like my biography is a YA fiction minus the terminal disease and love interest.

TOO MANY DAD

JOKES:

The food was worth my fake-bath and Facebook-less agony. Being showered with uncountable dad jokes which I hope to pass on to my next generation, I was finally starting to enjoy what was left of the day. Now, let's not forget the most exciting thing about reunions. I get that I have led you to think that I'm mostly apathetic, but even I get overcome with thrill at the prospective opportunity of winning at "raffle draws". If there is one thing I am blessed with more than my height, it is sheer dumb luck. The raffle draw was my calling.

THE DAY GOT BETTER:

One guy bought 50 tickets and with as much confidence as a doubter, I bought only 5. Well, I don't want to brag much but did I end up winning a Sony Bravia 32" LED TV which was the second prize? Yes, I did.

Also, Mom secured third position in pillow-passing. Go, mom!

The day in the end turned out to be a great one not only because I was legitimately taking a big win home but because I saw my mother brimming with happiness to be able to spend a day with her friends she must dearly miss. She has accompanied me to countless meet-ups with *my* friends when I was too young to go by myself and she never complained. Now there is only one day a year I get to do that for her and the childlike joy on her face is worth much more than a regular Friday's nap.

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DISSECTION OF PHONE-O-LIVE SHOWS

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You can't navigate the channels these days without coming across a music show (usually at midnight) where artists perform live and fans call the station to engage in a small talk with their favourite stars. The show usually starts off with a well-dressed (read 'overdone') host taking the stage. Then the band and its members are introduced. At times, the shows feature individual musicians too. The drama starts off with the musician playing one of his hit songs or a newly released song because the best cannot be saved for the last. Technical difficulties can strike any time. Anyway, the show runs smoothly for the first few minutes and then the phone rings. The host says "hello" with a fake smile and heavy accent. The background TV noises are high though because the caller is overly enthusiastic to hear his own voice on live television.

Host: *Congrats on being our first caller. Please lower your TV volume. We can't hear you. So, what is your name again?*
Caller 1: *Yes, okay. You are looking very pretty, Apu.*

Host: *Thank you. If you have any song request for our artist, please go ahead.*
Caller 1: *Your saree is really nice.*
Host: *Sorry, the line got disconnected.*

The host tries to make up for the awkward situation by smiling and batting her eyelashes. She then turns to the artist.

Host: *So, which song are you going to sing now?*
Artist: *A single from my latest album.*
Host: *Is the song five minutes long or so? Then you must cut it short because we*

have to go for a short break in a while.
Artist: *(hesitating) Sure, no problem.*

The artist slowly unleashes his voice on the microphone. You start to enjoy what's going on and right after 50 seconds, a jingle of a pineapple cream biscuit brings you back to reality. The break has begun. The 'short' break continues for seven minutes and just as you start contemplating going to sleep, the show is back. You can almost see the bassist yawning. Meanwhile, the vocalist does a bit of microphone testing and clears his throat to sing a song.

Host: *We must take a call now. Hello! Hello!*
Caller 2: *Could you recognise me, bhai?*
Artist: *(confused) If you could say your name, it would be easier.*
Caller 2: *I am Lahu's cousin. You gave him an autograph last week.*
Artist: *(flustered) Pardon me. I couldn't recognise. Anyway, thanks for calling.*
Caller 2: *Bhai, please, sing a song for my beloved Rojina and tell her on live TV that I love her. She is watching you now.*
Artist: *(embarrassed) Rojina, Lahu's cousin loves you. My next song is for you.*

Not all shows disappointed me in this manner. There is definitely a bright side to this story. Some shows have very well-informed hosts. The musicians are given reasonable freedom to carry the show forward. Advertisements do not get in the way of the performances and listeners/callers are very understanding as well. So, take control of your remote and listen to the very best. The rest will fall in place.

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